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Network Director's Update

November 2010



National News: *(Click on titles to read full press release)*

[VA Launching New Personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook](#)

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is piloting new, personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbooks. The handbooks are tailored to provide enrolled Veterans with the most relevant health benefits

information based on their own specific eligibility. In essence, each handbook will be written for the individual Veteran. (11/18/10)

[VA Announces \\$1 Million Contract to Plan Expansion, Improvements at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery](#) -

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced a \$1 million architect-engineer contract to prepare construction documents for gravesite development and cemetery improvements at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in Annville, Pa. (11/18/10)

[VA Awards \\$47.6 Million for Expansion and Renovation](#)

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in San Juan, P.R., will see its outpatient-clinic building renovated and expanded in the next two years with a construction contract of \$47,559,254. (11/18/10)

[Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service Sign Memorandum of Understanding](#) -

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and The Indian Health Service (IHS) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which will help both agencies improve the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans. The IHS-VA MOU outlines a new plan for enhanced coordination, collaboration, and resource-sharing that will draw on the strengths and expertise of the two agencies. (11/16/10)

[VA Announces \\$19.5 Million Construction Contract for Houston National Cemetery](#) -

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded a nearly \$19.5 million construction contract for gravesite expansion and improvements at the Houston National Cemetery in Texas. (11/16/10)

[VA Pilots Expedite Payments to Disabled Veterans](#) - VA has launched two pilot programs to test new procedures that will speed the payment of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation benefits to Veterans with disabilities connected to their military service. These new programs are part of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki's effort to "break the back" of the disability claims backlog. (11/16/10)

[VA Chief Learning Officer Receives Lifetime Learning Leadership Award](#) -

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that Joy Hunter, chief learning officer for its Veterans Health Administration, has received the Lifetime Learning Leadership Award from the MASIE Center, an internationally recognized think tank focused on workforce education and performance. (11/12/10)

[On Veterans Day, VA Secretary Shinseki Recognizes, Thanks Veterans](#) -

This Veterans Day, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki calls on America to honor its 23 million Veterans by reaching out to them and their families with heartfelt thanks and encouraging them to seek the benefits and services they have earned from the Department of Veterans Affairs. (11/11/10)

[New Video Outreach Message Encourages Veterans to Use Benefits](#) -

Television viewers across the country will be able to see a new video advertisement promoting the "care package" of services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs to Veterans. The 30-second ad makes its national debut Nov. 10 during the broadcast of the Country Music Awards. (11/10/10)

[VA Expands Support for Families of Low-Income Veterans](#) -

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today an important program designed to provide enhanced services to low-income Veterans and their families who are at risk of being homeless. Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, VA will provide grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will help break the cycle of homelessness among America's Veterans at risk. (11/9/10)

[VA Health System Shines in Quality-of-Care Study](#) - A report now appearing online in the national publication Medical Care finds that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system generally outperforms the

private sector in following recommended processes for patient care. (11/8/10)

[VA Launches VAntage Point Blog](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching its first official blog, opening a new line of communication between the department and its stakeholders. The debut marks VA's latest outreach effort aimed at improving the way VA and its clients engage online. (11/8/10)

[VA Celebrates National Family Caregiver Month](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is marking National Family Caregiver Month by honoring the service of family members and friends who have dedicated their lives to caring for chronically ill, injured, or disabled Veterans. (11/8/10)

[Blood-Thinning Pills Work with Either Home or Clinic Testing](#) - Patients taking warfarin, a widely used blood-thinning pill that requires careful dose monitoring, have similar outcomes whether they come to a clinic or use a self-testing device at home, according to a recent Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) study. The findings, published in the Oct. 21 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, are good news for heart patients who live far from clinics or are homebound. (11/4/10)

[National Veterans Small Business Conference Selects New Orleans as 2011 Venue](#) - Thousands of small business owners, Veterans, military personnel and federal employees will attend the federal government's premier national event for Veteran-owned small business in New Orleans in August 2011. (11/3/10)

[VA Backs 19 Million Home Loans](#) - With mortgage rates at historic lows, Veterans and military personnel continue to use the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) home loan program in record numbers to purchase a home or refinance their existing loans. (11/1/10)

[VA Begins Paying Benefits for New Agent Orange Claims](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun distributing disability benefits to Vietnam Veterans who qualify for compensation under recently liberalized rules for Agent Orange exposure. (11/1/10)

VISN 19:



Glen W. Grippen

Program Highlight: Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative

The purpose of the Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative (VJO) initiative is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible justice-involved Veterans have timely

access to VHA mental health and substance abuse services when clinically indicated, and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.

VA is requiring justice-focused activity at the medical center level. VA Medical Centers have been strongly encouraged to develop working relationships with the court system and local law enforcement and must now provide outreach to justice-involved Veterans in the communities they serve.

Each VA medical center has been asked to designate a facility-based Veterans' Justice Outreach Specialist, responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice-involved Veterans in local courts and jails, and liaison with local justice system partners.

There are three main components of this initiative

- Inreach to city/county jails,
- Educating the community on veteran issues,
- Liaison with any veteran specific courts that are created.

In VISN 19, I have supported the implementation of robust programs operating out of SLC, UT and Colorado Springs. VISN 19 has two full-time Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators in Denver, CO and SLC, UT, and staff functioning in a collateral duty at each of the other medical centers to include Colorado Springs. Denver recently hired a full-time Veteran Justice Outreach staff member and efforts are currently being made to develop relationships between the VAMCs and various justice systems.

The Colorado Springs program consists of a Veterans Trauma Court with a weekly docket and weekly staffing of cases prior to the docket. The current court is a District Court dealing primarily with felony charges, and there are currently 22 Veterans and 6 Active Duty members on probation via CS Veterans Trauma Court.

Twenty-one Veterans have received care through the VA/VET Center and 1 Active Duty member is now attending DUI program at CBOC. Five of the 21 Veterans have received VA residential treatment. Two Veterans from the CS Veterans Trauma Court program have graduated, and both received treatment through the VA.

Colorado Springs is also currently working on the development of a Veterans Court in the County Court System. A judge for the court has been identified and a planning group is developing.

Our other Justice efforts are taking place at the SLC VAMC. These efforts have been uniquely enhanced by the relationship between the VA and the United States District Court of Utah.

Approximately two years ago, the District Court of Utah, under the direction of Honorable Judge Brooke Wells, started the first federal mental health court program.

They have successfully graduated 3 veterans from this program and have 1 veteran who is currently involved. Due to VA involvement with the mental health court, the Honorable Judge Paul Warner expressed interest in starting a Veterans Court calendar. This is the start of the first Veterans calendar on a federal level. They meet once a month and the calendar continues to grow each time they meet. The program currently has 8 veterans on this calendar.

The 3rd District Mental Health Court has worked with the VASLCHCS to change the admission criteria for the court to include the diagnosis of PTSD specifically for veterans. They now have 8 veterans in the 3rd District Mental Health Court under the Veterans calendar & have numerous referrals waiting for legal clearance.

VJO Contacts (click)

Veterans Court Programs (click)

Contact Information

Sean Clark, National Coordinator, Veterans Justice Outreach, 202-461-7311, sean.clark2@va.gov
Jim McGuire, Program Manager, Health Care for Reentry Veterans, 310.478.3711 ext. 41450, james.mcguire@va.gov

Handbooks and Guides

[VA Mental Health Services Handbook](#)
[Incarcerated Veterans Re-Entry Guides](#)
[Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents](#)

Resources for the Courts

[VHA Services for Justice-Involved Veterans](#)
[State Veterans Affairs Offices](#)
[Veteran Service Officers \(by state\)](#)
[Veteran Service Organizations](#)

Related Articles

[Justice Initiative Article](#)
[Therapeutic Court for Veterans](#)

Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOCs) Update:

Ten new telehealth clinics are being established to serve an estimated 7,023 veterans in rural and highly rural counties in Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming through the use of telehealth modalities.

Hamilton, MT: OPERATIONAL
Plentywood, MT: OPERATIONAL
Rawlins, WY: OPERATIONAL
Moab, UT: OPERATIONAL

Glenwood Springs, CO: OPERATIONAL

Salida, CO: OPERATIONAL

Idaho Falls, ID: Grand Opening to be scheduled.

Price, UT: Grand Opening to be scheduled.

Worland, WY: OPERATIONAL

Evanston, WY: OPERATIONAL

When all PCTOCs are completed, 94% of the veteran patients will be within 60 minutes of Primary Care Services in VISN 19.

VA Supply Chain News Highlight November 2010 issue: MEET THE CLOs

There are 21 VISNs, or Veteran Integrated Service Networks, each one a self-contained healthcare system supporting Veterans in their service area.

Each VISN has a Chief Logistics Officer (CLO) whose responsibilities are wide-ranging and include: product standardization, warehouse, equipment management, expendable supply management, and prime vendor oversight, along with other duties like presiding on the SPD Management Board. As the supply chain subject matter expert, CLOs work with a team of material managers and logistics staffs to keep logistics activities throughout the network moving.

VISN 19 spans a geographic area of 470,000 square miles across nine states and is the largest VISN in terms of geographic area in the lower 48 states.

The VISN serves an area covering the states of Utah, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and portions of Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada and North Dakota. More than 700,000 veterans reside within its geographic boundaries. Our network is a pioneer in telehealth due to the large geographic region.

To introduce our VISN 19-Rocky Mountain Network—Chief Logistics Officer (CLO)



Deb Kupecz, PhD, FACHE has served as the CLO since 2002 and brings a broad clinical perspective to this position. She and the Network Logistics Manager, Rick Upton, have undertaken new initiatives in distribution, warehouse, and prime vendor issues to decrease supply costs in the 3 health Care Systems, 3 medical centers and 61 CBOCs in the network.

Eastern Colorado Health Care System



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility

The Denver VAMC (parent Eastern Colorado Health Care System) is providing monthly updates on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. Updates are distributed via e-mail monthly and can be found on <http://www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle/index.asp>.

Colorado Springs Replacement CBOC Update

Congressional authorization for \$3,995,000 was granted for FY2009 for a 115,000 s.f. replacement clinic in Colorado Springs based on new projections for increased demand for health care. In FY 2009, ECHCS and VISN 19 explored the various options for rightsizing this new clinic. Several factors were considered including efforts to design the space to meet the new models of healthcare delivery while maximizing space efficiency, increasing space for many ancillary services, and maximizing telehealth programs. Multiple space planning models were developed along with the associated cost of the build out, lease, and furniture fixtures and equipment. Based on demand in the context of resources, the 80,000 square foot plan met the needs for the Colorado Springs area.

In FY 2010, ECHCS staff has worked with Real Property and HDR Architects to design the clinic with all of these factors taken into consideration. The clinic is planned to be a three story clinic with ample parking. All of the current services provided by the Colorado Springs clinic will be expanded and maintained while several other services will be added. These include but are not limited to full service radiology, pathology and laboratory services, mammography, Veterans Benefit Administration, and the MOVE! Program that addresses the bariatric Veteran population.

In a parallel process, a site is being sought through the guidance and assistance from the Office of Real Property. A Technical Evaluation Board (TEB) was convened to visit the various sites in order to make a

recommendation to Real Property relative to the preferred site for the clinic. All sites that met the requirements in the request for proposals were visited. The TEB came to a consensus and the final three sites in order of preferences were identified. The final negotiations for the selected site are very close to being concluded and an announcement of the future site of the clinic is imminent.

Once a site is selected, the VACO Office of Construction and Facilities Management (OCFM) will issue a solicitation for developers to compete, and when the procurement is complete, it will then have an announcement of the lease contract signing.

What we strive for and love to hear...

This reprint of a Veteran letter speaks to appreciation and relevance of doing our jobs well...

"I would like to compliment the CO region. I recently applied for an increase in my disability rating. I expected the processing to take years. But everything was done in a matter of 2 or 3 months. Given the number of new applications and other work that the VA has to do, the turn-around time was impressive. The folks I worked with were always professional. Not everything worked perfectly all of the time, but that is to be expected with every process. But the VA folks were able to put things back on track quickly and professionally. I was especially impressed by the lack of wait time at the C&P evaluation. Nice job VA. Thank you."

VA Montana Health Care System:



Free Flu Clinic held in Polson for all eligible Veterans

Missoula's Mobile Vet Center held a free flu clinic in Polson on November 18, 2010. In addition to the flu

shot clinic, a Vet Center counselor was available for veterans needing readjustment counseling.

Flu vaccine is available for veterans on a walk in basis daily at VA's Kalispell clinic; 31 Three Mile Drive, Kalispell. If you have any questions regarding the flu clinic please call 1-877-468-8387 and choose the Kalispell Clinic option. If you have questions regarding the service that the Mobile Vet Center can provide, please call 406-721-4918

Billings Hosts a Veteran Homeless Stand Down

The Billings Homeless Stand Down took place November 17th at the Shrine Auditorium located in Billings, Montana. The event was supported by the Volunteers of America Montana/Wyoming, the VA Homeless Veteran Program, the Mobile Vet Center, the VA Patient Business office for Health Care Enrollment, the VA Suicide Prevention Program, the Veterans Benefits Administration, VA Diversity/Minority Veterans Program Coordinator, a VA Nurse providing flu shots, the VA Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom Transition Patient Advocate, the Regional Veterans Service Officer, State of Montana Veterans Affairs Division, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist and Veteran Intensive Service Coordinator from the Billings Job Service Office, the VA Compensated Work Therapy Program . . . plus other Veteran Service Organizations

Veterans received Counseling on Veteran Homeless Benefits, Healthy Veteran Check, Flu Shot, Healthcare enrollment, Veteran Benefits Counseling, Vet Center readjustment counseling, donations of clothing, sleeping bags and other items will be available to Veterans.

Save the Date

VA Montana Health Care System has the following open houses and dedications coming up:

- Dedication of Cut Bank Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) on Friday, December 10 at 9:00 am;
- Open house for Great Falls CBOC Friday, December 10, from 2:30-4:30
- Open house in Kalispell CBOC Thursday, December 9, 2010 from 12-2

They are also working on coordinating VHA open houses with the new Vet Centers in Great Falls and Kalispell. More details will follow soon. If you have any questions, please contact:

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Planning and Public Affairs
VA Montana Healthcare System
Phone: 406-447-7454
Fax: 406-447-7916

VASLCHCS



Homeless Veteran Stand Down 2010

218 Veterans came through the VA Salt Lake City HCS enrollment office on November 5th, one of which was a female Veteran who was experiencing serious health problems. She and close to 250 other Veterans who came to the VA were taken care of that day. The Stand Down has proven to be such an incredible team effort year after year working with other lifelines in the community.



VASLCHCS Women Veterans Celebration

The VA Salt Lake City's attempt to educate and reach out to female Veterans is working as evidenced by their recent Women Veteran Celebration. VASLCHCS had about 180 women present proudly wearing uniforms and hats representative of their service and era.

The highlight of the evening was most certainly the recognition of one extraordinary female Veteran. Veda Jones received the lifetime achievement award for her lifelong commitment to country and other Veterans. Veda retired from the Air Force after 22 years and then went on to serve other Utah Veterans both professionally and personally. Veda served on the

Governor's Veterans Advisory Council for five years in the 1990's and among many other things was largely responsible for bringing our Women's Clinic to fruition.



She now drives a DAV van up from Price, Utah to the medical center two to three times a week...a DAV van program she started. Veda Jones gas logged over 50 thousand miles and more than 3 thousand volunteer hours. She's also largely responsible for paving the way for female Veterans everywhere. She has been a lifelong advocate and spokesman for female Veterans in Utah and everywhere.

Unite For Veterans

What an amazing display of teamwork and pride for what we do. The Unite For Veterans concept is the VA Salt Lake City HCS way of putting a face to VA and displaying our unwavering commitment to those who have sacrificed so much.

VASLCHCS partners with VBA and the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs each year to pull off this amazing outreach event. Over 450 phone calls were logged in and over 150 enrollment applications were mailed out on Veterans Day.



This event is really not about numbers, it is about awareness and education. It is about starting conversations in living rooms all over. It is about Veterans and making sure they know they are not alone. This is not just a VA event...this is a community event. For many of them the battle continues even on the home front.

Big Hearts Go Towards Blankets for Boots

One thousand blankets translate into a lot of warm hearts inside the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City. 17 year old Jacque Mulholland of Hillcrest High School launched an all out social media blitz and the end result was blankets by the truckload.

"I've been working hard to try and get myself recovered from this stroke so I can get a heart transplant," Gulf War veteran Doug Wiley said. "It really brings me up, I mean just to get something like this from somebody just because I'm a veteran, you know?"



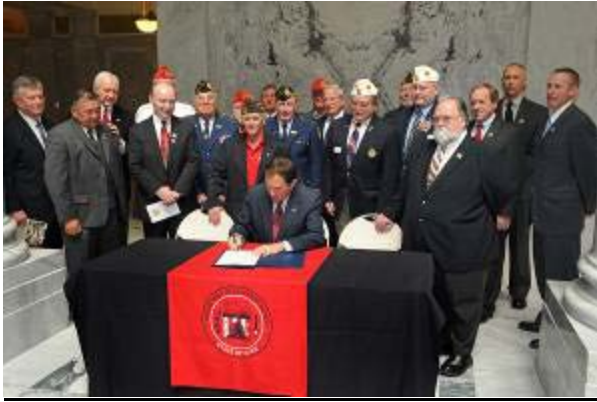
Mulholland posted her wish list on Facebook and before she knew it she had blankets coming in from all over the United States. She plans to make this an annual event, although she is the first to admit that to her every day is Veterans Day.

"Patriotism means you know what this country stands for and you know what it's worth, and you understand the great sacrifice that went into making it the way it is," Jacque says. "I hope it just shows they are loved, that they're appreciated, and that we know the great sacrifice they go through for us."

Jacque also spent \$200 of her own money to have baby one-sies silk-screened with the saying "MY MOMMY'S A HERO" for the expectant female veterans.

Fisher House Foundation Day in Utah

VA Salt Lake City HCS expects to break ground on a new Fisher House sometime in the next year. In light of that, Governor Gary Herbert signed a proclamation declaring Veterans Day, Fisher House Foundation Day, November 11th 2010.



Grand Junction VAMC:



November has been a transitional month for the Grand Junction VA Medical Center. With unseasonably warm weather extending well into the second week of November, staff and patients have continued summer and fall activities well into this month which allowed Recreational Therapy staff taking patients, fishing, hunting and golfing at a time when the fields, rivers and grass are normally covered in ice and snow.

Grand Junction VAMC staff also put considerable effort into outreach efforts to rural communities where travel is often limited due to weather. This included a three-hour, live radio broadcast and open house Nov. 10 at the new TeleHealth Clinic in Utah which not only introduced the staff and the clinic, but also promoted the facility's "Flu Shot Day at the VA" Staff also explained how to access Veterans benefits in general and who to contact for assistance.

The highlights of the broadcast were when the DJ, a Veteran, got his flu shot on the air and the facility's primary care provider went on the air to explained how

TeleHealth worked and why the VA was using it. The next morning, the clinic's staffs were all just a bit hoarse.

The entire week was devoted to special celebrations for the Veterans on the Western Slope, from ceremonies at the many memorials, to parades and the even a bagpiper dropping by the Medical Center Veterans Day to thank staff for this excellent care and entertain inpatients.

With the weather finally turning to winter, Recreational Therapy staff are now putting away the camping gear and dusting of the skies, Engineering is firing up the heating system and the rest of the facility are breaking out the holiday season decorations.

Darrel's Story

One of the GJVAMC's Veterans, Darrel Chapman, is the first blind hunter in Colorado take a big game animal with a rifle. The hunt was set up in a collaborative effort between the GJVAMC VA Recreational Therapy program and the Department of Wildlife.

Reprint of article by DAVE BUCHANAN from the GJ Sentinel.

After several hours of waiting and watching the shadows grow light, the buck mule deer cautiously stepped out into the small opening. Vance Wilson turned his head and whispered, "He's out now, I think we'll get a shot."

Darrel Chapman, sitting next to Wilson in front of a large pinyon tree, barely tilted his head at Wilson's voice. "Stand up and get ready," said Wilson and the two men rose together, Chapman mounting the rifle on a tripod stand. At the sound, the deer looked in the men's direction but stayed his ground. A few adjustments with the rifle and then Wilson whispered, "You're on him. Shoot."

The boom of the rifle split the quiet dawn and Wilson watched the buck stumble, run a short distance and fall. "You got him," he said, throwing an arm around Chapman in congratulations.

But Chapman never saw the shot, never saw the four-point buck fall and never saw the great smile of pride and pleasure splitting Wilson's face. For Darrel Chapman is blind, his eyesight stolen five years ago by macular degeneration. His lost eyesight hasn't stopped the 81-year-old Air Force vet from bowling, playing shuffleboard and competitive golf, or hiking Grand Mesa with his wife, Sue. Now, he's become the first blind hunter in Colorado take a big game animal with a rifle. Colorado joins a handful of states allowing blind hunters to use rifles when hunting. A slew of restrictions and requirements must be met, of course, including

hunting with a sighted companion. Even thinking about a blind person carrying a loaded weapon carries enormous weight.

"I've been doing these elk and deer hunts with disabled veterans for about five years now and a year ago Darrel approached me about going hunting," said Matt Lucas, a recreational therapist at the Grand Junction Veterans Administration Hospital in Grand Junction. "I had taken vets with all sorts of disabilities but never one that is visually impaired. I knew this was going to be a big challenge but I never say never."

Lucas began researching what other states were doing with blind hunters and discovered most of them approved the use of laser sights, where a laser beam shines directly on the target. Initially designed to improve target acquisition for handgun shooting, laser sights are illegal in most hunting situations. A companion hunter can see the laser and know where the blind hunter is pointing his or her rifle. When Chapman prepared to shoot his deer, Wilson quietly guided him to put the laser on a vital area.

"You can only see the laser out to 75 yards or so and that's if it's in the shade," said Wilson, who worked at the Dallas VA hospital before moving earlier this year to Molina. "So we only had a small window of time from when it got light enough to shoot and it got too light to see the laser."

Lucas, Wilson and Chapman had earlier spent time at the shooting range practicing with the laser and initially worked out a touch system of signaling where to point the rifle. During the actual hunt, however, whispering proved the most effective.

Initially, the idea allowing a blind hunter met with mixed enthusiasm from the Division of Wildlife. Accommodation licenses, which allow such things as shooting from a vehicle and allowing an able-bodied companion to track and kill a wounded animal, are fairly common for other disabilities but the state had never issued one for a visually impaired hunter.

"Because I know Matt and have worked with him on several veteran hunts, I was comfortable with the idea," said Kathleen Tadvick, education coordinator for the Division of Wildlife's Northwest Regional office in Grand Junction. "I thought it was an awesome opportunity, my only worry was making sure he had the proper mentor in the field with him."

Tadvick checked with DOW Rifle area manager JT Romatzke and the local DOW officer Jack Skinner to get their input and she said they, too, expressed full confidence in Lucas.

Their only concern was making sure the proper license was obtained. Once that was procured, the hunt was scheduled for a ranch north of Rifle. "We sat out there

for two days, waiting for that chance," said Chapman, who borrowed the rifle he used from his daughter, Sandy Theis of Grand Junction. "I was so excited to finally get my opportunity." Sue Chapman rolled her blue eyes when asked if the trophy would someday adorn their house. "I'm not sure we've made a decision on that yet," she said, looking at Darrel. Darrel shrugged and laughed. "Maybe we'll donate it to the VA for all the work they did," he said.

Sheridan VAMC:



New Associate Director appointed

On November 7th the Sheridan VAMC welcomed Ms. Michele Beach as the new Associate Director. Ms. Beach has a Masters in Health Administration from the University of Phoenix and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to Sheridan with her 33 years of VA experience starting as an intern and working her way up through the VA system.

After graduating from Ohio State University with a Bachelor's degree in Microbiology, Ms. Beach began working full time at the St. Louis, MO, VA, in Laboratory Service, remaining there for 13 years. As a change of pace, she switched to Medical Administration Service (MAS) in 1990, working through several positions until she moved to Big Spring, TX, in 1994 as the Assistant Chief, MAS.

In 2000, Ms. Beach was promoted to the Assistant Chief, MAS, in Jackson, MS, and returned to the Big Spring facility in 2001 as the Executive Assistant to the Director. VISN 19 welcomes Ms. Beach!



Staff greets Ms. Beach at a reception held in her honor

Sheridan VAMC Patriot Store Grand Opening

The Patriot Store opened at the Sheridan VAMC on November 16, 2010. The store is part of the Veterans Canteen Service. The retail section of the Canteen provides everything from tissues to electronics for patients and staff and the location in the Patriot Café' was getting crowded.

"We were able to stock the store with some amazing products and give a great price" said Canteen Manager, Liz Johnson. "The store and food area keep growing and we needed more space, thankfully the facility was able to provide us with a little extra room." The Patriot store more than quadruples the space Johnson had previously in the food area.

In 2009, Johnson and her staff were awarded the coveted Golden Fork award for best catering event in the VA. They also took home awards for the highest increase in food and product sales, all due to Johnson and her staff.

Johnson says "When we came to the store each of us saw an opportunity to turn this into a place for staff and patients to grab a cup of coffee or a really great sandwich, now we've expanded our ideas and are looking to make the Patriot Café' and the Patriot Store the first place people think of when they need to purchase electronics or even a new washing machine. It is exciting what was once thought of as a little store how we've been able to become a hub of activity."

The Patriot store and Café are open five days a week in building 86 at the Sheridan VAMC.



Cheyenne VAMC:



Cheyenne Suicide Prevention Program Highlight

The Cheyenne VAMC Suicide Prevention Program was established in 2007. As the program grew, staff from the Cheyenne VAMC program decided to try an additional approach to advertising the National Suicide Prevention Hotline phone number.

With the assistance of a Veteran, an acronym and a challenge coin was developed to promote the use of the Hotline. In 2008, the "SPICE" (Suicide Prevention In Case of Emergency) coin was created.

Veterans in the Suicide Prevention program were asked to put the Hotline phone number in their cell phone contact list using this code word. The response was overwhelming and the idea started to gain more momentum.

In 2009, a challenge coin was created to provide to Veterans as recognition that they overcame a very difficult and trying time. This acknowledgement was given to them once they were assessed to be out of a high risk, emotional crisis; and its' purpose is to serve as a reminder that they made it through a rough time. The coin also contains the code word, SPICE, on it.

The idea was presented to the VA National Suicide Prevention Coordinator in January 2010 and the facility presented their concept at the poster session at the National VA Mental Health Conference in July 2010. The presentation was very well received, especially by VISN 19 MIRREC and staff from the Center of Excellence.

The MIRREC ordered additional coins and the facility is discussing ways to spread the idea on a much broader level. VISN 19 would like to thank the Cheyenne VAMC staff whom created and supported this successful idea. This simple idea can save lives.

Homeless Veterans Stand down

The 4th annual Homeless Veterans Stand-Down was held in Fort Collins, CO - the day prior to Veterans Day. The event continues to grow in both the number of support agencies who participate in the event as well as the number of attendees.

Cheyenne VA Healthcare for Homeless Veteran Program manager Vanessa Stapert relates the growth is a sign of success. "When we see more Veterans coming to events like the Stand-Down, we know we are getting information through to those who are able to benefit from our programs and services." Stapert adds, "And VA couldn't do it alone."

The success of the Homeless Stand Down events shines through with the partnership and support of other state and local agencies." The 4th Annual Northern Colorado Homeless Stand Down was held at The Mission in Fort Collins.



An Army Veteran attending the Homeless Stand-Down examines a pile of coats.

In addition to VA health and benefits, attendees were able to connect with the Colorado Department of Labor, Local VFW's and American Legions, Salvation Army, United Way, Larimer County Veteran Services, Larimer County Workforce Center Veterans Unit, as well as various other veteran organizations. Housing options were explored, winter gear given to those who needed

it, haircuts, food and even free bike repairs were also provided at no cost.

While Veterans Day began with the smells of fresh



pancakes and egg casserole at the Cheyenne VAMC at 6:00 AM on November 11th with VA staff making and serving a homemade breakfast to residents of the Old Glory Community Living Center, the community of Cheyenne showed up in full force under snowy skies on Veterans Day.

Teresa Barbre, coordinator of the Veterans Day Breakfast, gets ready to make another batch of fresh pancakes for residents in the Old Glory Community Living Center.



Brandon Freitas, Cheyenne VAMC Chief of Prosthetics, takes a breakfast order from WWII Navy Veteran Charles Loftus on Veterans Day, 2010. Mr. Loftus ordered "the works."

Medical Center Director, Dr. McCormack and Chief of Staff, Dr. Zang participated in the community wreath laying program and laid the Medical Center's ceremonial wreath in honor of Veterans Day. VA Chaplain Service was also very active in these activities, by leading services and prayers as well as handing out desktop flag kits.

Be sure to find the Cheyenne VAMC on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CheyenneVAMC>. "Friend" us and stay up to date with all of the latest news from the Cheyenne VA Medical Center.